

# Strategy Research Project

## A NUCLEAR IRAN: NOW WHAT?

BY

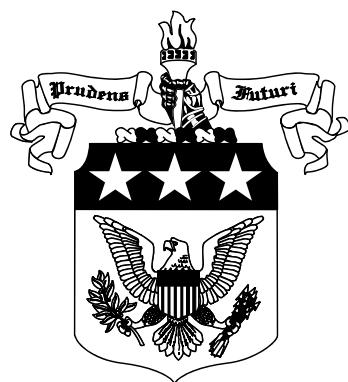
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**A NUCLEAR IRAN: NOW WHAT?**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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One can argue it's only a matter of time before Iran develops a nuclear weapon. The 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) formally recognized the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom as the world's only nuclear powers. It also prohibited other signatories (Iran and others) from developing or obtaining nuclear weapons. Since that time, India, Pakistan, Israel, and perhaps even North Korea have developed nuclear weapons. This essay provides suggested strategies for dealing with Iran assuming it develops or obtains nuclear weapons. It includes a review of the non-proliferation strategies and their failures as well as deterrent strategies being applied to the other non-NTP recognized nuclear powers. The United States and the international community expend a great deal of effort trying to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. What are the possible strategies if prevention fails?



## A NUCLEAR IRAN: WHAT NOW?

One can argue it's only a matter of time before Iran develops a nuclear weapon. Iran has been developing their nuclear program for both civilian and military purposes for several years despite prevention efforts by the international community. The 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) formally recognized the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom as the world's only nuclear powers. It also prohibited other signatories, including Iran, from developing or obtaining nuclear weapons. Since that time, India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa, and perhaps even North Korea have developed nuclear weapons. Each of them developed their nuclear weapons program without the consent or knowledge of the general international community but with help from selected countries such as China, France, and Russia, or from each other.

This essay provides suggested strategies for dealing with Iran assuming it develops nuclear weapons. It includes a review of some non-proliferation strategies and their failures as well as deterrent strategies being applied to the other non-NPT recognized nuclear powers. The United States and the international community spend a lot effort trying to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. What are the possible strategies if prevention fails?

### Background

Iran has been at odds with the international community over its nuclear program for several years. President Ahmaddenjad continues to defy the United Nation's (UN) call for transparency of their nuclear program and claims his country only seeks peaceful use of nuclear power. This "peaceful purpose" claim was used by India, Israel,

and Pakistan in a twist of words to truly mean that possessing nuclear weapons will keep the peace rather than peaceful use of nuclear reactor power. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United States have openly argued Iran's program is designed to go beyond creating nuclear fuel for generating reactor power. The claim is based on three years of IAEA inspections revealing Iran's uranium enrichment and plutonium separation programs.<sup>1</sup> Inspections also revealed significant enrichment activities at two Natanz enrichment facilities. One consists of a pilot facility capable of handling 1,000 centrifuges and another is designed for up to 3,000 centrifuges. At the Natanz plant, the IAEA found traces of highly enriched uranium (HEU) up to 70% enriched.<sup>2</sup> The only purpose for HEU at this level is for nuclear weapon production.

In November 2007, the U.S.'s National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) judged with high confidence that Iran stopped its nuclear weapons development program in 2003.<sup>3</sup> The NIE report also stated Iran's civilian enrichment program is ongoing, that the intelligence community believes with moderate confidence that Iran has not restarted its weapons program as of mid 2007, and it judges with moderate to high confidence Iran reserves the option to start again. Iran clearly has the capability to develop uranium products within the nuclear fuel cycle up to the point of centrifuging uranium hexafluoride to produce enriched uranium. Assuming Iran decides to covertly restart its nuclear weapon development program, Iran should be able to produce weapons grade material in three to six years.<sup>4</sup> The power to build or not build a nuclear weapon rests with the Iranian political leadership as the NIE reports: "In our judgment, only the Iranian political decision to abandon a nuclear weapons objective would plausibly keep Iran

from eventually producing nuclear weapons – and such a decision is inherently reversible.”<sup>5</sup>

Why would Iran desire nuclear weapons? Iran wants the nuclear bomb to become the power of the Middle East region, to help deliver its Constitutional goal, to fend off American attacks, and because its Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, “has defined an Iranian nuclear capability as an ‘absolute right’ that his regime will never consider abandoning.”<sup>6</sup> Donnelly argues that Iran essentially desires nuclear weapons to fend off the United States as conventional and terrorism efforts have failed or are failing.<sup>7</sup> Others point out that Iran faces its greatest threat from the U.S. and Israel and suggest Iran views nuclear weapons as the only deterrence.<sup>8</sup> His final point is worth noting. “Terrorism with a return address carries greater risks, too: it is interesting to speculate what the U.S. reaction would be now, in a post-9/11 world, to a Khobar Towers-type bombing. What the Iranians could safely sponsor in 1996 might not be safe now. The surest deterrent to American action is a functioning nuclear arsenal.”<sup>9</sup>

Another consideration is Iran may feel it may be the next country to face the U.S. power as one of the three “axis of evil” countries and will need something extra to deter a U.S. led effort to overthrow or change Iran’s leadership. As Iran is a Shi'a Muslim country surrounded by the dominant Sunny Muslim countries, it was more than pleased to see the U.S. defeat the Taliban and Suddam Huessian’s Iraqi regime. Though Iran benefited from the U.S. War on Terror and the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, it likely feels surrounded by the U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq leading to insecurity of key government leaders. To date, the U.S. has not attempted a regime change or major conflict with a nation in possession of nuclear weapons. Iran likely learned some

lessons from the U.S. interactions with North Korea and Iraq.<sup>10</sup> Iraq was unable to stop the U.S. from defeating its army and removing its regime from power; however, a nuclear North Korea has been able to partially defend itself from U.S. intervention and has gained negotiation advantages. It is this power, along with being the Middle East power that motivates Iran to become a country with nuclear weapons.

What would Iran's nuclear doctrine be? It is doubtful Iran would create an offensive nuclear doctrine, although the major concern of the U.S. is terrorist nuclear proliferation, which might be an offensive Iranian option. Every country with nuclear weapons uses a doctrine centered on self preservation and deterrence; Iran is likely to follow suit. Iran may opt to not announce its nuclear doctrine similar to Pakistan's approach to the issue.<sup>11</sup> One could speculate the Iranian doctrine may include deterrence against U.S. or Israel attacks or general protection of its sovereignty.

#### A Brief History of Failed Nuclear Prevention

As will be shown, a country determined to develop nuclear weapons can do so regardless of the international pressure and non-proliferation efforts. Every country successfully developing nuclear weapons has done so under the guise of producing civilian nuclear power (something recognized as internationally legitimate research and development) and then transitioned to covert weapon programs once it obtained enough technical capabilities. A sampling of countries follows including brief summaries of U.S. and international support and/or prevention.

#### India

India's nuclear weapons program began in the 1950's under the non-proliferation framework "atoms for peace" initiated by President Eisenhower. India obtained a

heavy-water reactor from Canada and heavy-water from the U.S. and then later began processing plutonium in 1964. Its first plutonium based nuclear detonation was in May 1974 to demonstrate a “peaceful nuclear explosion.”<sup>12</sup> The U.S. responded by creating the international Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 1975 and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA) of 1978.<sup>13</sup> The NSG focuses on nuclear weapon and dual-use (reactors and weapons) technology export controls to reduce proliferation of critical technology and materials. The NNPA focuses on implementing U.S. safeguards and export controls of nuclear technology and materials to non-nuclear weapon states. India found ways around these restrictions by obtaining fuel from France (1984-1995), China (1992-2001) and Russia (2001-2004).<sup>14</sup> India refused to sign the NPT in 1974 and has not signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The U.S. faces a balancing act of U.S. law and international treaties with diplomacy to align India, and others, with common nuclear safeguards and nonproliferation agreements.

The Atomic Energy Act (AEA) of 1954 is the baseline for all U.S. foreign nuclear exchanges and requires approval of Congress for any exception to its many restrictions. While the NPT prevents the U.S. from assisting non-nuclear weapon states to develop nuclear weapons, it encourages supporting nuclear power development. The U.S. policy has been to negotiate agreements assisting India with civil nuclear power in exchange for India’s implementation of full nuclear safeguards (only 4 of 14 nuclear plants are currently under IAEA inspections) and agreements to implement non-proliferation acts. In July 2005, India and the U.S. agreed to initiate a joint Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative calling for India to conform to all IAEA safeguards for its reactors and in return the U.S. would push to get a Nuclear Suppliers Group exemption allowing

India access to the international civil nuclear community. In December 2006, President Bush signed the “Henry Hyde United States-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act” to allow the U.S. to legally provide civil nuclear assistance under the NPT and AEA. The stated goal is to improve relations strained over 30 years, improve economic growth, reduce emissions in India, and improve security of nuclear materials.

## Pakistan

Pakistan refused to sign the NTP and began pursuing their nuclear weapons program in the early 1970s. This was partially due to India’s test of a nuclear weapon in 1974 for “peaceful purposes.” Pakistan attempted to negotiate a nuclear free zone in south Asia; however, India would not agree and this likely confirmed Pakistan’s need for nuclear weapons. The common belief is Pakistan needed a balance of power with India as the two countries historically have been at odds with each other over Kashmir and other interests. The United States, in an effort to stifle Pakistan’s nuclear program, began the first of many diplomatic sanctions in 1979 by cutting off aid when it suspected Pakistan was trying to enrich uranium for weapon purposes. According to the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), there were at least six United States nuclear export control violations to Pakistan from 1980 to 1987 plus over 70 sensitive items from Germany during the 1980s.<sup>15</sup> These violations, done despite U.S. and international nonproliferation sanctions, contributed to Pakistan’s technical abilities to create, build, and weaponize nuclear materials. In 1998, Pakistan successfully detonated five nuclear weapons in an apparent response to India’s tests the same year.

In 1997, Koch and Topping estimated Pakistan to have or be capable of producing 23 to 39 HEU nuclear weapons.<sup>16</sup> The report cited technology support from the U.S.

(1965), France, Canada, West Germany, and China that helped enable Pakistan to successfully weaponize uranium. Today, the U.S. seeks to keep Pakistan as an ally while working to secure its nuclear weapons, reduce terrorism, and expand its economy.

## Israel

Israel has never openly disclosed its nuclear weapon program though it is well known they possess nuclear weapons. France and Israel were close allies in the 1950s and 1960s and teamed up to develop each other's nuclear program as early as 1949.<sup>17</sup> France felt obligated to repay Israel for its participation in the Suez Crisis in 1956 and laid the groundwork for Israel's plutonium separation plant. In 1957, France and Israel signed an agreement to finalize their cooperation.<sup>18</sup> In October 1957, France and Israel began secretly building a reactor (beyond the IAEA's control and inspection) in Dimona with France providing up to 1,500 technicians.<sup>19</sup> In 1960, the U.S. State Department announced Israel had a secret nuclear facility and Israel publicly confirmed its "peaceful program" in December 1960.<sup>20</sup> The FAS reports the U.S. Ambassador to Israel from 1961-1972 failed to notify the President of Israel's weapons program and even stopped information collection efforts. The CIA believed Israel had ten to twenty nuclear weapons as early as 1974.<sup>21</sup> Since that time Israel has continued to develop its weapons program without the open support of the international community. There is no proof Israel ever tested a nuclear weapon; however, American satellites picked up a bright flash in the south Indian Ocean in September 1979 and it is speculated that South Africa and Israel conducted the joint test.<sup>22</sup> Israel and the U.S. remain close allies today engaging in diplomatic, security, and economic ventures.

## North Korea

Niksich's 2003 report claims North Korea (A NPT member until Jan 2003) began its uranium enrichment program in 1995 with help from Pakistan.<sup>23</sup> North Korea also began its plutonium program by operating the Yongbyon reactor in 1987. North Korea has repeatedly defied the U.S. and UN sanctions by first negotiating to stop producing nuclear weapon materials only to subsequently resume producing the materials. China and Russia, until recently, opposed most U.S. actions and sanctions and rendered the U.N. Security Counsel virtually impotent. China's interest revolved around military trade agreements with North Korea. North Korea was reported to have negotiated with Iran to supply Taepodong-2 long range missiles in exchange for cooperatively developing nuclear weapons.<sup>24</sup> The efforts by the U.S. to stop North Korea from developing nuclear weapons included sanctions, multi-country negotiations, economic incentives, and keeping all options on the table. Economic incentives under "The Agreed Framework" included providing North Korea "with a package of nuclear energy, economic, and diplomatic benefits."<sup>25</sup> In return North Korea would halt its nuclear development program. None of these agreements or incentives worked. North Korea conducted its first successful nuclear detonation October 9, 2006.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. continues to negotiate with North Korea and recently proposed an agreement, along with South Korea, China, Russia, and Japan, that would "disable its main nuclear complex and produce a full list of Pyongyang's other atomic activities by year's end in exchange for political and economic incentives from the United States and its partners."<sup>27</sup> The incentives include heavy fuel oil, electricity, food, and diplomatic relations (including the potential to change North Korea's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism). The Six-Parties are also working to develop a Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism in

an effort to transform North Korea's relations with international communities while securing nuclear materials.<sup>28</sup>

### Key Nuclear Nonproliferation Efforts

The U.S. has implemented or helped initiate several nonproliferation efforts focused globally with some targeted specifically at Iran. A partial listing follows to provide a general overview.

#### Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism

The U.S. established the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism in July 2006 with Russia to improve nuclear security, detect and suppress illegal nuclear trafficking, respond to and mitigate nuclear terrorism, and improve legal and technical means to combat nuclear terrorism. There are currently 64 nation members and the IAEA has observer status.

#### Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)

The U.S. initiated the Proliferation Security Initiative in 2003 with over 70 member countries. The PSI mission is to "interdict WMD-related shipments and stop proliferation finance."

#### Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

The Office of the Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Matters summarizes the NPT as follows:

In 1968, the United States signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It forms the cornerstone of the international nuclear nonproliferation regime and most nations of the world are parties to the Treaty. The NPT recognizes the five nuclear powers that existed in 1968: the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China. The Treaty prohibits all other signatories, including Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North

Korea (In January 2003, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea formally withdrew from the NPT) from acquiring or even pursuing a nuclear weapons capability. This requirement has prevented some states from signing the NPT, including Brazil, India, Israel, Cuba, and Pakistan. These nations oppose the inherent double standard in the Treaty and argue that all nations should renounce nuclear weapons.

While the non-nuclear signatories to the NPT are prohibited from developing nuclear weapons, the Nuclear Weapons States are obligated to assist them in acquiring peaceful applications for nuclear technology.

In broad outline, the basic provisions of the Treaty are designed to:

- \* Prevent the spread of nuclear weapons (Articles I and II);
- \* Provide assurance, through international safeguards, that the peaceful nuclear activities of States which have not already developed nuclear weapons will not be diverted to making such weapons (Article III);
- \* Promote, to the maximum extent consistent with the other purposes of the Treaty, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including the potential benefits of any peaceful application of nuclear technology to be made available to non-nuclear parties under appropriate international observation (Article IV-V); and
- \* Express the determination of the parties that the Treaty should lead to further progress in comprehensive arms control and nuclear disarmament measures (Article VI).<sup>29</sup>

#### The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA provides for the verification of nuclear agreements under the NPT and other nonproliferation agreements and assists countries in developing civil use nuclear power. It is the U.N.'s eyes and ears to confirm countries are conforming to the international safety rules, security guides, and that they reframe from non-civilian nuclear activities. The IAEA's website defines the mission of the IAEA as:

- \* is an independent intergovernmental, science and technology-based organization, in the United Nations family, that serves as the global focal point for nuclear cooperation;
- \* assists its Member States, in the context of social and economic goals, in planning for and using nuclear science and technology for

various peaceful purposes, including the generation of electricity, and facilitates the transfer of such technology and knowledge in a sustainable manner to developing Member States;

\* develops nuclear safety standards and, based on these standards, promotes the achievement and maintenance of high levels of safety in applications of nuclear energy, as well as the protection of human health and the environment against ionizing radiation;

\* verifies through its inspection system that States comply with their commitments, under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and other non-proliferation agreements, to use nuclear material and facilities only for peaceful purposes.<sup>30</sup>

### **U.S. Sanctions Against Iran**

Three main sanctions against Iranian nuclear proliferation include the Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act of 1992, the Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000, and the Iran-Syria Non-proliferation Act of 2005. These sanctions are designed to identify proliferators linked to Iran and prevent any U.S. interaction supporting those listed. Two Presidential directives include the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 (now the Iran Sanctions Act as diplomacy and economic pressures changed Libya) and Executive Order 13382 designed to freeze assets of WMD proliferators and isolate them financially.

### **Nuclear Deterrence Policies of France, U.K., and U.S.**

Nuclear weapons provide deterrence against WMD use by States (some claim non-states as well), protection against loss of sovereignty, and can remove the need for others to develop nuclear weapons if given assurance of a nuclear 'umbrella' protection from a nuclear weapon country. Nuclear weapons do not provide much leverage in general diplomatic negotiations.

## France

In January 2006, France's President Chirac announced changes in his nation's nuclear deterrence use policies. Traditionally, France was silent on its announcement of national vital interests and reserved the right to defend itself without stating the interests. France's new focus includes

the focus on deterring state sponsors of terrorism, the threat to attack an enemy's 'capacity to act', the more discriminate and controllable employment options, the willingness to launch 'final warning' strikes, the description of 'strategic supplies' as a potential vital interest, and the presentation of nuclear deterrence as the foundation of a strategy of prevention and, when necessary, conventional military intervention.<sup>31</sup>

France made it clear that it will not tolerate state sponsored terrorist attacks against its territory or vital interests. It even went so far as to announce possible attack techniques using more precision strikes with fewer weapons or even high altitude strikes between 100-200 kilometers designed to produce electromagnetic pulse (EMP) that can damage a country's critical infrastructure. The new policy also made it clear France will not allow states to 'circumvent' France's nuclear deterrent by using terrorism. France believes and applies nuclear capabilities as a deterrent against states and state sponsored terrorism.

## UK

The United Kingdom's deterrence policy is simply to protect its national interests from threats of nuclear attack. Its policy *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent* states "On our current analysis, we cannot rule out the risk either that a major direct nuclear threat to the UK's vital interests will re-emerge or that new states will emerge that possess a more limited nuclear capability, but one that could pose a grave

threat to our vital interest. Equally, there is a risk that some countries might in future seek to sponsor nuclear terrorism from their soil.”<sup>32</sup>

US

The U.S. nuclear deterrence policy has evolved over several years.<sup>33</sup> During the Cold War, the policy centered around the USSR and to some degree China and Eastern Europe. The doctrine evolved as 1) the 1950s “massive retaliation” against Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe if they attacked the U.S. or its allies, 2) the early 1960s “counterforce” nuclear attacks excluding cities in response to a Soviet attack, 3) the mid 1960s “assured destruction” of the Soviet Union society if it attacked, 4) the mid and late 1970s “Flexible Response” and “Countervailing Strategy” to limit targets to military and war making facilities, and 5) the 1980s policy of targeting only military and war making facilities. After the Cold War, the policy remained the same except the focus was on deterring a nuclear war and resulted in a lesser need of large quantities of weapons. The U.S. continues to reserve the right of first use with a focus on tailoring nuclear deterrence to meet certain capabilities of potential adversaries. According to Woolf, the U.S. will “tailor U.S. capabilities to address this wide spectrum [broader than the Cold War] of possible contingencies.”<sup>34</sup> In essence, the U.S. has gone from a “single integrated plan” to a “family of plans” designed for a wide range of unstated contingencies.

#### Iran’s Behavior and Vulnerabilities

Iran has repeatedly opposed every UN Security Council resolution on nuclear proliferation and development.<sup>35</sup> Beginning in April 28, 2006 and ending last March 2007, Iran continuously defied every sanction. The UN Security Council’s incremental

economic sanctions had little effect on the behavior of Iran's nuclear program. The five permanent members could not agree on hard hitting sanctions as Russia and China disagreed with responses recommended by the U.S., France, and Britain.<sup>36</sup> According to the Strategic Survey 2007 report, Iran plans to have 3,000 centrifuges operational by 2008 or 2009 and will be capable of producing one weapon's worth of highly enriched uranium (HEU) within another nine to eleven months.<sup>37</sup>

Existing U.S. sanctions against Iran have had mixed success in deterring or curbing its behavior.<sup>38</sup> Some of the key sanctions aimed at Iran's economy include:

- The 1987 Executive Order, "imposing a new import embargo on Iranian-origin goods and services",
- The 1995 Executive Order "prohibiting U.S. involvement with petroleum development in Iran",
- The 1997 Executive Order stating "virtually all trade and investment activities with Iran by U.S. persons, wherever located, are prohibited",
- In 2000 Secretary of State announced U.S. persons can now buy and import carpets and food such as nuts, ....,
- And in October 2007 Secretary of State announced no U.S. person or private organization may conduct financial transactions with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Quds Force, or the Banks of Melli, Saderat, and Mellat.<sup>39</sup>

These sanctions, though making impacts, have not changed Iran's political behavior. It has succeeded in either obtaining support from others or learned to adapt to the hardships and continues to place a strong value on its radical foreign policies.<sup>40</sup>

Iran's economy is in turmoil and provides several exploitable vulnerabilities. In testimony to Congress in July 2006, Berman reviewed the key components of Iran's economic situation. He stated:

Over the past several years, the Islamic Republic has emerged as a *bona fide* energy superpower. Home to approximately 10 percent of the world oil, Iran is the second largest exporter in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), producing an average of 3.9 million barrels of oil per day. At the same time, Iran sits atop the world's second-largest reserves of natural gas (some 940 trillion cubic feet). As a result, Iran's economy is overwhelmingly energy-based. Today, the vast majority (80 to 90 percent) of Iran's export earning, as well as about one half of its budget and a quarter of its gross domestic product, is derived from energy exports to the international community.<sup>41</sup>

These exports are major deals with China, France, Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Italy, Turkey, and Russia. Berman said Iran negotiated a \$100 billion, twenty-five year deal with China, and it is working to provide Turkey up to twenty percent of its natural gas supplies by 2010. With all the exports of oil, Iran is hampered by its dependence on importing nearly a third of its gasoline from India, France, Turkey, and China to name a few. Berman suggested that "an embargo on foreign gasoline supplies to Iran could achieve rapid results" because Iran reports possessing only a 45 day supply of gas.<sup>42</sup> Two other weaknesses include Iran's centralized economic power in the Supreme Leader (10-20 percent of the GDP) and its reliance on about \$1 billion per year in foreign investments to keep oil production running.

Iran's oil dependent financial statistics are staggering. Some facts offered by the Center for Strategic and International Studies demonstrates Iran's precious economic situation.

- Official inflation is running at about 16 percent per year and unofficially at 40-50 percent.

- Official unemployment in 2006 was around 11 percent (much higher for the young population).
- Its conventional military has not recovered from the Iraq-Iran war and is “heavily worn” and “obsolescent.”
- Iran has not been able to attract large foreign investment due to instability, political rhetoric, poor incentives, and international debate over their nuclear program.<sup>43</sup>

To understand Iran one must look at the culture and motives behind the country.

In March 2007, Berman again briefed Congress. He pointed out three reasons for not negotiating with Iran, and also examined why Iran might be un-deterrable once they have nuclear weapons. First, Iran's 1979 Constitution states Iran's clerical army

is tasked not only with defense of the country, but with “fulfilling the ideological mission of jihad in God's way; that is, extending the sovereignty of God's law throughout the worlds.” The goal of the Iranian regime, in other words, is not to become a part of the world community, but to overturn it.<sup>44</sup>

His second point is that from the Iranian ayatollah's view, the Iranian nuclear weapon program is not a “bargaining chip; it is a core element of regime stability.” And, his final point is that nearly two-thirds of Iran's population (about 70 million) are under 35 years of age and are becoming “westernized” and disgruntled with the traditional Iranian ways. This, combined with the old age of the current Iranian leadership, points to the fact future Iranian leaders will be more aligned to western philosophy and beliefs. Given Iran's Constitution and Ahmadinejad's call for the “return of the Islamic Messiah”, deterring Iran's current leadership may be too hard to do.<sup>45</sup>

### Options to Deter a Nuclear Iran

The U.S. policy has been to use all elements of power except the military to deter and dissuade Iran from developing nuclear weapons or material. The National Security Strategy summarizes the Iranian nuclear threat as:

We face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran. For almost 20 years, the Iranian regime hid many of its key nuclear efforts from the international community. Yet the regime continues to claim that it does not seek to develop nuclear weapons. The Iranian regime's true intentions are clearly revealed by the regime's refusal to negotiate in good faith; its refusal to come into compliance with its international obligations by providing the IAEA access to nuclear sites and resolving troubling questions; and the aggressive statements of its President calling for Israel to "be wiped off the face of the earth."<sup>46</sup>

However, the National Security Strategy continues:

As important as are these nuclear issues, the United States has broader concerns regarding Iran. The Iranian regime sponsors terrorism; threatens Israel; seeks to thwart Middle East peace; disrupts democracy in Iraq; and denies the aspirations of its people for freedom. The nuclear issue and other concerns can ultimately be resolved only if the Iranian regime makes a strategic decision to change these policies, open up its political system, and afford freedom to its people. This is the ultimate goal of the U.S. policy.<sup>47</sup>

This policy leads one to consider the U.S. could live with a nuclear Iran provided Iran safeguards its nuclear materials and technology, refrains from sponsoring terrorism, stops threatening others, supports peace in the Middle East, opens its political system, and affords freedom to its people.

The U.S. historically has been reluctant to open diplomatic channels with Iran partially due to the Iranian President Rafsanjani era 1989-1997 and the Iran-Contra affair.<sup>48</sup> President Rafsanjani began reforming Iran's economy and gained \$30B in loans from Europe from 1989-1993. Shortly after, Iran sent assassination teams to Europe and elsewhere. During the Iran-Contra hostage crisis, Iran agreed on terms to

release American hostages in exchange for arms trades but instead took more American hostages. Iran's previous record provides reason for suspicion.

Berman suggested three priorities in dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions.<sup>49</sup> First, apply economic pressure targeting its refined oil imports, foreign investments of about \$1 billion per year in its energy infrastructure, and its key leadership's centralized funding structure. Secondly, promote democracy by developing policies focused on freedom versus regime change. And thirdly, promote public diplomacy in Iran using broadcasts and other methods to win the heart and minds of the younger generation (future leaders of Iran). He pointed out that all previous diplomacy and military action has failed, and this includes efforts by the European Union from 1994-1997 and the later combination of France, Germany, and Great Britain.

Donnelly suggested two options for dealing with a nuclear Iran based on a combination of economic and diplomatic efforts from China, India, and U.S. with successful spreading of democracy in the Middle East.<sup>50</sup> He recommended keeping Iran "from establishing a deeper relationship with great-power sponsors" by decoupling Iran from China and India (as a price of partnering with the U.S.) and finishing transforming the Middle East (Iraq, Afghanistan,...) to isolate Iran. Donnelly believes that as democracy takes hold in the Middle East, Iran will face more pressure to conform to international policies.

Hemmer takes a more traditional strategic view of a nuclear Iran.<sup>51</sup> He links strategy to the U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf. The U.S. interests are "maintaining free flow of oil onto world markets, preventing any hostile state from dominating the region, and minimizing any terrorist threats."<sup>52</sup> The proposed endstate would be an Iran

that is stable, peaceful (no terrorist support or threats to regional neighbors), and integrated into the world economy. Hemmer points out that preventive military attacks and regime change are problematic for several reasons. Military strikes could 1) damage America's interests, 2) dramatically shift the price of oil, 3) increase terrorist action and causes, 4) degrade success in Iraq and Afghanistan, 5) rally the people around the current regime, and 6) be a temporary fix.<sup>53</sup> Regime change, while possible, is not within the current resources of America assuming we are still tied up in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>54</sup> As a result, Hemmer suggests the U.S. deter Iran from using nuclear weapons on the U.S. or its allies, contain Iran from attempting to leverage its nuclear power to gain regional diplomatic advantages, engage Iran to fit into the global economy, and reassure regional countries of America's commitment to their security.<sup>55</sup> He argues Iran is deteritable despite all the rhetoric from its President and believes Iran's leadership keenly understands using a nuclear weapon will result in overwhelming responses.

Zaborski's approach is based on a Caspian Sea scenario involving Russia, the U.S., and Iran. The scenario assumes Iran has nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities and has taken control of the Caspian region's oil and gas fields. He argues the U.S. will need low yield precision nuclear weapons and strategic and theater missile defense systems.<sup>56</sup> High yield nuclear weapons may not provide a believable deterrent to Iran (likely not usable due to the massive effects) and conventional weapons can't do the job effectively. The lack of a regional theater missile defense system may incite fear in the region's inability to defend itself against an aggressive Iran or other country and cause more instability in the region.

The U.S. approach to a nuclear India, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan consistently leads one to conclude the U.S. strategy is to prevent proliferation of nuclear materials, engage diplomatically, open the target's economy globally, and promote regional stability and democracy. Military action, though always an option, was not used nor advised in any of the cases. Once a country possesses nuclear weapons, removing the arsenal by military force is not a proven option. The assumption is the U.S. nuclear deterrence will hold them at bay. So, if military force is not a reasonable option, the U.S. is left with two choices – isolate the new nuclear power in an attempt to cause regime or economic failure (i.e. Soviet Union), or negotiate with it to obtain the desired political objectives.

Isolating a nuclear Iran governed by radical foreign policies could be a recipe for disaster. According to Burns, “Diplomacy is our best and preferred course of action in blocking and containing the Iranian regime.”<sup>57</sup> The current U.S. policy is an effort to open dialog with Iran using the five permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany. Iran must have a reasonable way out to avoid being cornered and on the brink of implosion (total economic isolation by multi-lateral sanctions), or they may act out their radical policies.

Hemmer's approach of deter, contain, engage, and assure is reasonable and offers the best course of action to meet the policy goal of getting Iran to change its policies, open up its political system, and afford freedom to its people.

Specific action the U.S. could take includes:

- Develop two tracks of diplomacy targeting the current regime leadership to initiate near term policy changes and the younger generations to broadly align Iran with the international community in the long term.
- Creatively secure Iran's nuclear weapons with the long term goal of dismantlement and disarmament. Options include opening the international civil nuclear community (similar to the U.S.-India civil nuclear agreement) and assuring Iran's security in exchange for Iranian policy adjustments.
- Work with Iran to remove its insecurities about the U.S. and Israel, and begin building mutual relations aimed at overcoming 28 years of non-diplomatic relations.
- Provide economic incentives designed to reverse Iran's unemployment and inflation.
- Work with the P5, Germany, and India to contain Iran's nuclear weapon technology.
- Continue pushing democracy in Iran, and build a Middle East Partnership of Countries aimed at economic and security issues.
- Continue creative non-proliferation activities, and create a transparent nuclear Iranian program open to IAEA inspections and safeguards.
- Continue blocking Iranian sponsored Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hizballuh terrorism, and bolster the security and sovereignty of Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon.

## Conclusion

Iran is very likely to obtain nuclear weapons once it sets that as a national goal. It is doubtful, based on several examples, that nonproliferation attempts can prevent Iran from developing the weapons. Iran's policies and economic situation provide the U.S. and the international community with opportunities to secure its nuclear program and effectively change Iran's radical policies to bring about stability and peace. Iran is deterable. When faced with international isolation combined with severe economic disasters, Iran will be primed for multi-national negotiations.

## Endnotes

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